



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Medicine Bow -Routt
National Forests and Thunder
Basin National Grassland

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File Code: 1950-1

Date: 02/09/04

Dear Interested Party:

The Parks District of the Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests is asking for your input concerning the development of an environmental analysis of the Lindsey Cattle and Horse (C&H), West Carter C&H, East Carter C&H, and Antelope C&H grazing allotments, herein referred to as the Chimney Rock Analysis Area (Map 1). The proposal is to revise the existing Allotment Management Plan (AMP) and continue to permit livestock grazing on active allotments. Your comments on the information provided below will help us: (1) Identify issues and concerns related to the proposal described below; (2) Develop alternatives to the Proposed Action; (3) Identify opportunities for area improvements; and, (4) Fine-tune our proposal. For these reasons, I encourage you to take the time to consider the proposal and to submit comments on it to the Parks Ranger District by March 12, 2004.

A National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis will be completed for the proposal. The NEPA analysis is required by Section 504 of Public Law 104-19 (1995 Recession Bill), which addresses allotment analysis, grazing permit issuance, and compliance with NEPA and other environmental laws. The NEPA analysis, for the above mentioned livestock grazing allotments, is scheduled for completion in December of 2005.

AREA DESCRIPTION AND BACKGROUND

The Chimney Rock Analysis Area includes four (4) livestock grazing allotments (Map 2). The Lindsey C&H, East Carter C&H, West Carter C&H, and Antelope C&H allotments contain approximately 12,500 acres of National Forest System lands in Grand and Jackson counties, Colorado. The area is easily accessible and highly favored by big game hunters in the fall.

Lindsey Allotment

Records show that the Lindsey Allotment was grazed season long by cattle from 1937 to 1963. At that time the allotment included the current area, plus the Carter Creek pasture, now designated as the Carter Creek C&H Allotment. Early management was somewhat of a problem because there were three (3) grazing permits issued for use in the allotment. This required the division of the allotment into three grazing management units; a northern, and largest, pasture called the Indian Creek unit, a middle pasture called the Lindsey Creek unit, and a southern pasture, the Carter Creek unit. In 1963 a rest-rotation grazing system was started on the northern permitted area, the other two continued season long.



From 1964 through 1970, actual use on all three pastures ranged from 2,050 to 2,455 AUMs, averaging 2,223 Animal Unit Months or AUM (an AUM is the potential forage intake of one animal unit, for a period of one month; based generally on 800 lbs. of dry matter). In 1971, the Carter Creek pasture was split off to form the Carter Creek C&H Allotment. This was done to facilitate better management. The Indian Creek unit continued to be used by one permittee and the Lindsey Creek unit by another. Actual use from 1971 through 1977 on the Indian Creek and Lindsey Creek pastures, the area now delineated as the Lindsey Allotment, ranged from 1,311-2,086 AUMs with an average of 1,650 AUMs. Beginning in 1978, annual livestock use rose to an average of 2,191 AUMs through 1987. From 1990 through 2003, actual use has averaged 1,794 AUMs.

The present acreage in Lindsey allotment is estimated at approximately 9,630 total acres, with 5,120 acres suitable for grazing. Currently, one (1) permittee, is authorized to graze 750 cow/calf pairs on the Lindsey Allotment (Indian Creek and Lindsey Creek units), from July 1 through September 21, for a total of 2,047 AUMs. Livestock are rotated through 5 pastures, deferring use in one pasture to late summer every year.

Much of the allotment is composed of spruce/fir and lodgepole pine forest, but with a significant amount of aspen, sagebrush meadow, and a lesser amount open, dry meadow. Lindsey Creek and Indian Creek provide a considerable amount of riparian area and wet meadow. Riparian areas are primarily in proper functioning condition. A few short stream segments along Indian and Lindsey Creek were damaged from past livestock use, with some lasting effects. These segments were judged to be functioning at risk, but are showing improvement.

There are areas of dense, tall larkspur on the Lindsey allotment resulting in loss of cattle to larkspur poisoning. In an effort to reduce the toxicity and density of larkspur, for the past 5 years, 1 to 2 bands of domestic sheep have been authorized to graze in early summer, on a temporary permit, prior to the cattle grazing. A decision will be made through this analysis whether to end the temporary sheep grazing or to make the sheep grazing a part of the term grazing permit.

The last range analysis, completed in 1989, indicated that 48% of the range in the Indian Creek unit was in excellent condition, 37% good, and 15% fair. In the Lindsey Creek unit 5% of the range was in excellent condition, 37% good, and 58% in fair condition. In general, utilization levels on key plant species have been within Forest Service standards and guidelines. There have been isolated, localized areas of heavy utilization that will need to be corrected. With the exception of the short reaches of streambank degradation and localized over use, no major resource concerns exist at this time.

East and West Carter Allotments

The terrain and plant community in the East and West Carter allotments are very similar to that of the Lindsey allotment. Much of the West Carter allotment is composed of sagebrush/grass and aspen communities with some spruce/fir and lodgepole pine forest on the ridges and north facing slopes. The vegetation on the East Carter allotment shifts to a more equal mix of open sagebrush/grass, aspen, and conifer stands.

As mentioned above, in 1971 the Carter Creek pasture was split off of the Lindsey allotment to form the Carter Creek C&H Allotment. A deferred rotation system was implemented in 1964 but was abandoned over the years. It was re-implemented again in 1984 when two grazing permits were issued for the Carter Cr. allotment. These two permits allowed for a total of 179 c/c to graze from July 26 to October 15 of each year, for a total of 483 AUMs on 1,811 acres of suitable range.

In 1997, the Carter Creek Allotment was divided into the West Carter and East Carter allotments. This was done to allow the two permittees more flexibility in managing their livestock. Grazing management was still season long. The permittee currently authorized on the West Carter Allotment has taken non-use the past three years and is considering waiving the term grazing permit. Since 2000, the permittee on the East Carter Allotment implemented a rotation grazing system, using the East Carter, West Carter, and Antelope allotments. The proposed action is to continue the rotation system using all three allotments, deferring one pasture every year. A water development to improve livestock distribution is proposed for the West Carter Allotment.

Range analyses conducted in 1994 indicate that over 85% of the range, in both the West Carter and East Carter allotments, is in good condition. There are no apparent resource concerns at this time.

Antelope Allotment

The terrain and vegetation community on the Antelope allotment is steeper and composed of more spruce/fir and lodgepole pine than open sagebrush/grass and aspen stands. Much of the suitable acreage for grazing is along the drainages and in the small openings of sagebrush and aspen stands.

The permit that authorized livestock use on the Antelope Allotment was cancelled in 1999 for non-compliance. The permittee had taken non-use for three (3) consecutive years in the late 1990s. Total livestock numbers were reduced 40% in 1993. The allotment has, essentially, been vacant from 1995 through 2000. In 2001, the Antelope Allotment was included in a rotation with the West and East Carter allotments under a permit modification. As noted above, this has been proposed as the operation plan for the duration of the term permit. The current permitted use on the Antelope allotment is for 56 c/c pair from 7/1 to 9/30 for 169 AUMs. While no recent analysis has been made on this allotment, there are no major resource concerns raised.

Table 1. Current permitted use.

ALLOTMENT	KIND	NUMBER	SEASON OF USE	Total Acres	Suitable Acres	AUMs
Lindsey	c/c	750	7/1-9/21	9,630	5,120	2,042
East Carter	c/c	210	8/25-9/25	1,415	720	221
West Carter	c/c	150	7/15-9/2	470	430	247
Antelope	c/c	56	7/1-9/30	1,121	241	169

Table 2. Proposed permitted use. Reverse order every other year on West Carter, East Carter, and Antelope allotments.

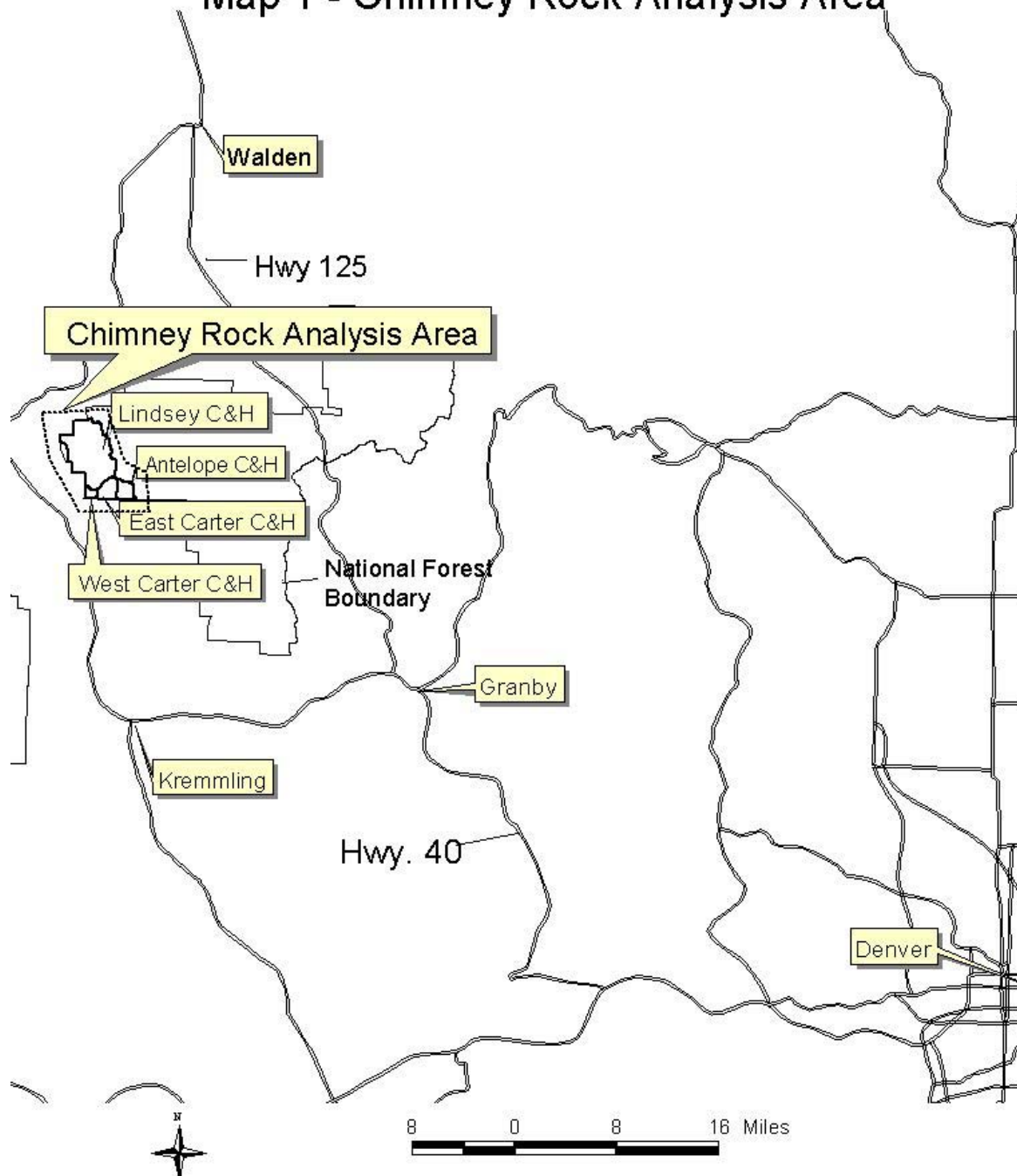
ALLOTMENT	KIND	NUMBER	SEASON OF USE	Total Acres	Suitable Acres	AUMs
Lindsey	c/c	750	7/1-9/21	9,630	5,120	2,042
West Carter	c/c	240	7/1-7/28	1,415	720	221
East Carter	c/c	240	7/29-8/29	470	430	247
Antelope	c/c	240	8/30-9/19	1,121	241	169

PROPOSED ACTION

The proposed action on the Lindsey allotment is to continue to permit livestock grazing under a rotation grazing management system. Range condition, grazing capacity, and temporary sheep grazing will be reviewed.

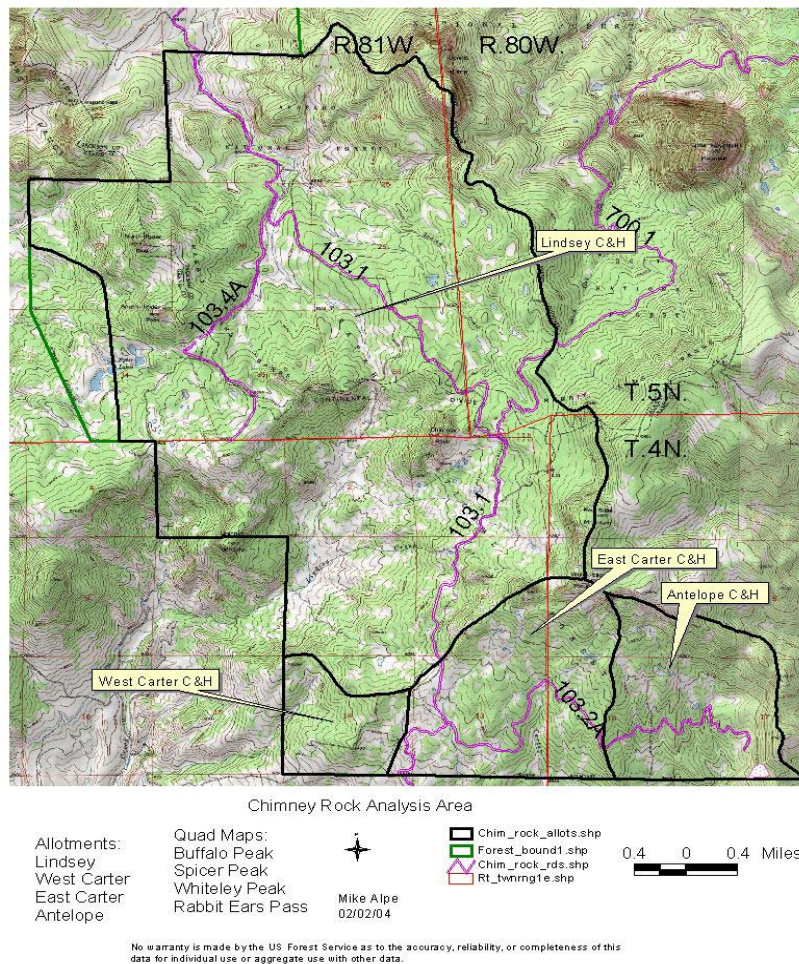
The Antelope, West Carter, and East Carter allotments will be used together in a grazing rotation schedule.

Map 1 - Chimney Rock Analysis Area



No warranty is made by the US Forest Service as to the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of this data for individual use or aggregate use with other data

Map 2. Chimney Rock Analysis Area.



PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSAL

Based on the above information, the **purpose** of the analysis is to:

(1) Help achieve the goals, objectives, and desired condition in the Chimney Rock Analysis Area, as identified on Forest Plan pages 1-1 through 1-10.

(2) Complete the appropriate NEPA analysis on the allotment.

The analysis is **needed** to:

(1) Meet Section 504 of Public Law 104-19 which directs the Forest Service to complete NEPA analyses on existing livestock grazing allotments. Public Law 104-19 was signed into law on July 27, 1995

following the passage of the 1995 Recession Bill.

- (2) Provide direction on how authorized livestock grazing should be managed to meet Forest Plan Direction and Standards and Guidelines (Routt Forest Plan pages 1-1 to 1-26 and pages 2-42 to 2-43, respectively) for all resources.
- (3) Reduce the potential for conflicts with developed and dispersed recreation users, landowners, non-motorized areas, and livestock use.
- (4) Maintain or improve all resource conditions within the analysis area.
- (5) Adequately control livestock movement to meet Forest Plan goals and objectives.

PRELIMINARY ISSUES

- Temporary early season sheep grazing to reduce larkspur density and toxicity on the Lindsey C&H allotment.
- Impacts to riparian areas from livestock use on Indian Creek and Lindsey Creek in the Lindsey Allotment. Localized areas of extensive livestock use.
- Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive plant and animal species in both Analysis Areas.
- Lynx and Goshawk habitat in the Chimney Rock Analysis Area.

Plant surveys will be conducted in 2004 for threatened or endangered plant species on the Analysis Area. A biological assessment of wildlife will also be conducted in 2004. Currently, there are no known threatened or endangered plant or animal species on the Analysis Area.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLANS AND DOCUMENTS

The Routt National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) is an overall strategy designed to guide the management of the Forest. The intent of the direction in the Forest Plan is to manage National Forest System (NFS) lands for multiple uses. To accommodate multiple-use management, the Forest Plan contains direction for different Management Areas. Each Management Area has a different management emphasis wherein specific uses are favored over other uses.

The Chimney Rock livestock grazing allotments are located in Management Areas designated in the Forest Plan. Management Areas, as well as Management Area acres, are displayed in Table 4.

Table 4. Chimney Rock Management Areas and Management Area Acres.

Management Area	Lindsey Allotment (Ac.)	West Carter Allotment (Ac.)	East Carter Allotment (Ac.)	Antelope Allotment (Ac.)	Total Acres	Percent of Area
5.11	9,507	470	1,416	1,122	12,515	100
TOTAL						

Management Area:

5.11 – General Forest and Rangeland, Forest Vegetation Emphasis

NATURE OF DECISIONS TO BE MADE

As mentioned on page 1 of this document, we will be completing a NEPA analysis on the Chimney Rock Analysis Area. Specific decisions to be made regarding the analysis include:

- Should the Term livestock grazing permits for the Lindsey, and East Carter allotments continue to be renewed? If so, at what level should grazing be allowed within the allotment and how should livestock be managed?
- How should the Lindsey allotment be managed regarding domestic sheep use?
- How should the West Carter and Antelope allotments be managed?
- What monitoring measures should be implemented within the allotments?

ANALYSIS SCHEDULE

Scoping is an important part of the environmental analysis process. It is used to determine the scope of issues to be addressed and for identifying the significant issues related to a Proposed Action (40 CFR 1501.7). For these reasons, I encourage you to take the time to consider our proposal and to submit your comments on it to the Parks Ranger District Office by **March 12, 2004**. Written comments should be submitted to the Parks Ranger District, Attn: Mike Alpe, P.O. Box 158, Walden, CO 80480. Telephone Number: (970) 723-8204. Fax Number: (970) 723-4610. E-mail Address: malpe@fs.fed.us

After receiving your comments, we will identify and analyze the issues raised, use the issues to develop alternatives to the Proposed Action, and make a decision whether or not to implement the Proposed Action or another alternative. Completion of this analysis process is expected in December, 2005.

This letter and request for public comments have been mailed to other Federal, State, and local agencies, adjacent landowners, and individuals or organizations who may be interested in or affected by decisions related to our proposal. Notice of this public involvement effort has also been given through the local news media.

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record on this proposed action and will be available for public inspection. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered; however, those who only submit anonymous comments will not have standing to appeal the subsequent decision under 36 CFR Part 215. Additionally, pursuant to 7 CFR 1.27(d), any person may request the agency to withhold a submission from the public record by showing how the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) permits such confidentiality. Persons requesting such confidentiality should be aware that, under the FOIA, confidentiality may be granted in only very limited circumstances, such as to protect trade secrets. The Forest Service will inform the requester of the agency's decision regarding the request for confidentiality, and where the request is denied, the agency will return the submission and notify the requester that the comments may be resubmitted with or without name and address within 10 days.

Thank you for caring about your National Forest!

Sincerely,

Paul K. Cowley

Acting District Ranger

ENCL (1)